



## Managing Change With Resilience

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REVIEWED OCT 10, 2007

Resilience is the ability to return to the original state or form after being stretched, compressed or bent. It is the ability to recover from adversity. Needless to say, developing resilience is a highly desirable quality in today's ever-changing world.

In his book *Resilience: A Change for the Better*, Daryl R. Conner outlines five characteristics of resilient people. They are:

- positive
- focused
- flexible
- organized
- proactive

### **Positive**

Resilient people are optimists. They display a self-assurance that is based on their view that life is complex but filled with many opportunities. Optimists believe that defeat is temporary and its causes are not solely their fault, but rather due to unfortunate circumstances. Conversely, the pessimist believes that defeat will last a long time and assigning blame to someone—including him or herself—is necessary.

Here are some tips that may help you to further develop a positive characteristic:

- Use a journal to maintain a list of daily accomplishments, no matter how small, related to your change initiatives.
- Accept compliments and praise from others with a genuine “thank you” instead of discounting them.
- Concentrate on becoming better at a new task rather than perfecting it.
- Practice using positive “self-talk” phrases, such as “this too shall pass” or “I will only ask myself to do the best I can rather than never to make any mistakes.”

### **Focused**

The focused characteristic of resilient people has to do with having a clear vision of what they want to achieve. Focused people take the time to write down their goals, objectives, obstacles and the strategies they will employ to find solutions for problems facing them.

Here are some ideas to help you become more focused:

- Visualize yourself as you would like to be one year from now after successfully making the transition through the change. Put a sign or picture on your bathroom mirror or desk to remind you of your vision.
- Set specific short-, medium- and long-range goals for yourself relating to your change initiative. Base your goals firmly on your personal values.
- Ask someone you trust to review your goals and give you feedback and suggestions on how you can further target the steps needed for successfully making the transition through the change.

## **Flexible**

Flexible people are those who demonstrate a special pliability or adaptability when responding to uncertainty. This resilient characteristic requires that you identify and compartmentalize your fears when facing new and intimidating situations.

Here are some suggestions that may help you to further develop flexibility:

- Swap sides in a discussion where you disagree with someone—you argue their side and ask them to argue your side.
- Identify someone who typically approaches things differently than you do and ask them for input on a particularly difficult aspect of your change initiative. Listen to their ideas without interrupting them or passing judgment.
- Drive a new and unfamiliar route to a store or a friend's house. Make note of what you see that's different from your usual route.

## **Organized**

Organized people have the knack for developing structured approaches to managing ambiguity. They creatively plan, carefully set priorities and engage in deliberate action steps in order to accomplish tasks.

Here are some tips of simple to-dos to help you become more organized:

- Purchase and use a day planner.
- Take a few moments to think through and list the key steps you need to take to accomplish a task before you tackle it.
- Put pieces of paperwork and important information in clearly marked files and put them in an accessible place.
- Break down a problem, any problem, into smaller pieces—then tackle the easiest piece first.

## **Proactive**

The proactive characteristic of resilient people means that they engage change rather than simply defend against it. They are not reactive. They take the offense rather than the defense. They take calculated risks and then apply lessons learned from past experiences to similar challenges facing

them.

Here are some suggestions that may help you in further developing your ability to be proactive:

- Develop plans for managing the worst-case scenario that might result from the change.
- Practice assessing the risks about a change initiative by listing all of the pros and cons you can think of. Ask yourself: What if...?

Developing these resiliency characteristics takes time and practice. Give yourself the gift of time and reward yourself generously for your successes and efforts.

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